



# **PRESS RELEASE**

## **House Armed Services Committee**

### **Floyd D. Spence, Chairman**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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#### **OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN FLOYD SPENCE**

#### **FULL COMMITTEE MARKUP OF H.R. 4**

This morning the committee meets to markup H.R. 4, "A bill to declare it to be the policy of the United States to deploy a national missile defense." Because we have a full day of hearings planned for today, it is my hope we can move as expeditiously as possible through this mark-up.

I commend the original co-sponsors of this bill – Mr. Weldon and Mr. Spratt – for the way in which they have worked together. I would also like to commend the committee's Ranking Member, Mr. Skelton, for his efforts to ensure that this bill has broad support.

H.R. 4 is clear in its intent and elegant in its simplicity. It establishes as U.S. policy the deployment of a national missile defense (NMD) system. H.R. 4 reflects a bipartisan belief that all Americans should be protected against the threat of ballistic missile attack.

I believe the United States faces a growing threat – and faces it today – from ballistic missiles carrying weapons of mass destruction. In the wake of a seriously flawed 1995 National Intelligence Estimate and this NIE's use as a rationale for the President's veto of the fiscal year 1996 defense authorization bill, several years ago I legislated the creation of the so-called Rumsfeld Commission. Last July, the commission reported its sobering conclusions to this committee, the Congress, and the American people.

In short, the Rumsfeld Commission unanimously concluded that the threat to the United States posed by ballistic missiles and the weapons of mass destruction they can carry is "broader, more mature and evolving more rapidly than has been reported in estimates and reports by the intelligence community." As a consequence, the commission noted that the United States could face the prospect of "little or no warning" of a ballistic missile threat.

I am heartened that the Administration has recognized the seriousness of the ballistic missile threat we face. As Secretary of Defense Cohen stated last month, the threat is real, it is growing, and it "will soon pose a danger not only to our troops overseas but also to Americans here at home." Unfortunately, under current Administration plans, even a limited NMD system could not be deployed

before 2005 – six years from now. In my opinion, this schedule is not responsive enough to existing ballistic missile threats or to emerging threats from rogue states that are likely to appear much sooner than anticipated.

The Administration has also recently recognized the need to provide defense spending to support actual deployment of a national missile defense system in the future.

So, while the Administration has begun to recognize the urgency of the threat and the need to invest greater resources to counter it, what is missing is a commitment that the nation will actually deploy missile defenses to protect the American people. H.R. 4 addresses this policy void by declaring NMD deployment to be a matter of national policy. H.R. 4 reflects the belief that all Americans deserve to be protected against the growing threat of ballistic missile attack. At the same time, H.R. 4 would provide some much needed focus and direction to the Administration's missile defense acquisition programs.

It is important to note that while H.R. 4 is unequivocal in establishing as U.S. policy the deployment of national missile defenses, it does not address – either directly or indirectly – the issue of the ABM Treaty. No one, including the White House, should misinterpret this bill's simplicity or its brevity.

It is my strong personal belief, however, that the ABM Treaty – negotiated during the Cold War, signed with a country that no longer exists, and intended to perpetuate vulnerability to ballistic missile attack — is a relic of a bygone era. I do not believe the ABM Treaty made sense 25 years ago and, in the face of today's emerging missile threat from rogue states like Iran and North Korea, the ABM Treaty makes even less sense today.

And while the Administration is seeking to negotiate with the Russians amendments to the ABM Treaty that will allow the United States to deploy a NMD system, Secretary Cohen has correctly acknowledged that the United States has the legal right to withdraw from the treaty. I do not believe that we, as a nation, should be negotiating with the Russians on amending a treaty of already questionable legal standing if it means “dumbing down” U.S. missile defense technology or if it results in artificial constraints on national missile defense deployment options. The Russians should never have a veto over the question of whether or not Americans will be defended against ballistic missiles.

I urge all of my colleagues to reflect on the implications of a ballistic missile threat that is growing faster than is our capacity to defend against it. As a complement to the broader recognition of the threat and the need for increased NMD spending, H.R. 4 sends an important bipartisan message that Americans will be defended against ballistic missiles.

At this time, I would like to recognize Mr. Skelton, the committee's Ranking Democrat, for any opening remarks he may wish to make.

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